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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 001070

SIPDIS

USAID FOR ADMINISTRATOR NATSIOS/AMB JORDAN  
WHA FOR DAS SHAPIRO

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR CARTAGENA DONORS CONFERENCE,  
FEBRUARY 2-4

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Embassy Bogota welcomes the U.S. Delegation, led by USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, to Cartagena for the Feb. 2-4 follow-up conference to the London Declaration of July 2003 on international support for Colombia. This is a GOC-hosted meeting for the 24 London Declaration signatories plus several additional countries, and provides an opportunity for the USG to reinforce its message of strong support for Colombia and the Uribe Administration.

The U.S. delegation's goals should be:

- Show support for the Uribe Administration by highlighting improvements in security and human rights;
- Adopt the G-24 declaration; and
- Press the Europeans and others to commit to support the GOC both politically and monetarily, especially with the paramilitary peace process.

2. (U) Some 35 countries and multinational entities (e.g. EU, IADB) will send high-level delegations to the February 2-4 Cartagena Donors' Conference, hosted by President Uribe. The FMs of Argentina and Chile have confirmed attendance, and other donors will be represented at the Cooperation Minister or Vice Foreign Minister level. The first day of the conference will be devoted to human rights issues as viewed by national and international NGOs. Day two will include GOC presentations on its activities and record, with interventions by participating foreign delegations. Day three will offer delegates the option of a daytrip visit to one of two international projects in Colombia -- the anti-narcotics forest rangers ("Guardabosques") program and an EU-funded "Peace Laboratory." Both visits are targeted at securing additional European financial support.

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HIGHLIGHTING DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL SUCCESSES  
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3. (C) The GOC will greet arriving delegations with a recent string of diplomatic and political achievements, including a likely resolution of the crisis with Venezuela, forward movement on the peace process with the ELN via Mexican facilitation, productive negotiations between the GOC and Senator Pardo's group on a draft law of truth, justice and reparations to deal with those guilty of serious crimes (a major stumbling block to increased EU support for paramilitary demobilization), and a tough but successful negotiation with the G-24 on a follow-up declaration to the London conference in which the GOC secured all its goals. Other issues and events likely to affect conference discussions include: human rights improvements (and those who disagree), counternarcotics efforts; and progress on alternative development and humanitarian assistance.

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CLASH WITH VENEZUELA  
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4. (C) After three weeks of tension between Colombia and Venezuela over the capture of leading FARC "diplomat" Rodrigo Granda in Venezuela, the GOC issued a communique announcing a meeting between President Uribe and Chavez in Caracas and saying that, based on that agreement, "the incident is over." (Two days later, Chavez said a final resolution would depend on the outcome of the February 3 meeting in Caracas). Uribe is universally perceived as having won the diplomatic standoff. The Chavez statement that Uribe gave "sort of an apology" only reinforces that perception. The episode served to demonstrate Venezuela's willingness to give safe haven to narco-terrorists, and Colombia's determination to protect itself.

5. (C) The bilaterally agreed communique contains no apology. The only slightly ambiguous sentence in it, reportedly drafted by Uribe personally, says that Colombia "will review the events with which everyone is familiar with the goal of ensuring that events which irritated the Venezuelan Government do not occur again." President Uribe and Foreign Minister Barco will leave Cartagena prior to the

intergovernmental segment of the conference on February 3 to meet with Chavez in Caracas. One way to capitalize on this GOC success at Cartagena is to encourage all delegations to make statements for regional solidarity with international commitments against terrorism.

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BREAKTHROUGH WITH THE ELN  
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16. (C) On January 28, on the margins of a meeting at the Ambassador's residence on demobilization issues with senior GOC officials, Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo told the Ambassador that the GOC and ELN had agreed to conditions allowing members of the COCE to travel to Mexico for face to face meetings with GOM facilitator Andres Valencia. According to Restrepo, the ELN has agreed to conduct no "offensive operations" during the time its negotiators are in Mexico (up to three weeks). The GOC will reciprocate by taking no offensive actions against the ELN during this time. Both sides retain the right to self-defense. The agenda in Mexico would be limited to arriving at a formula for direct GOC-ELN negotiations and an extension and formalization of the unofficial cease-fire. Restrepo said that the GOC would announce the breakthrough at the conference in Cartagena. Movement in negotiations with the ELN could eventually take combatants off the battlefield, isolate the FARC and, as a process with a terrorist group of the left, validate the GOC peace process with the so-called paramilitary self-defense forces on the right. Details reported septel.

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DEMOBILIZATION AND THE PEACE PROCESS  
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17. (SBU) In 2004 the GOC demobilized approximately 4,500 former paramilitaries in collective demobilizations and has pledged to dismantle all paramilitary groups by the end of President Uribe's term in August 2006. Demobilizing fighters surrendered approximately 2,000 weapons and other supplies. Lack of funding will constrain the peace process in 2005. Both European Union nations and the NGO community have said the Colombian Government must implement strict legal guarantees against impunity before they offer their support.

18. (SBU) After months of deadlock and delay, the GOC has drafted a new version of a legal framework to govern demobilization and has begun negotiating seriously with a coalition of Senators from different parties, led by Rafael Pardo, which drafted its own legal framework that has won the support of national and international NGOs, including Human Rights Watch. Pardo told the Ambassador on January 28 that negotiations are going well and should reach closure soon. The GOC plans to report on the status of these negotiations at Cartagena.

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THE CARTAGENA DECLARATION  
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19. (C) The GOC and the G-24 Troika (Canada, Brazil and Spain) have been negotiating the text of a declaration for over a month. The GOC negotiating team (with quiet U.S. backing) has been tougher than the G-24 expected, insisting that the new document reflect progress since the London Declaration of 2003, describe the internal conflict as a war against terrorism, and characterize the humanitarian situation more accurately. The final text will be approved by delegations on February 3.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS  
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10. (C) The Uribe Administration continues to make progress on human rights and will release a report on its efforts at Cartagena. Homicides fell by 16 percent, kidnappings by 42 percent, and forced displacements by 37 percent in 2004, building on 2003's trends. The GOC increased its dialogue with NGOs, the UN, and foreign governments, hosting meetings with local and international human rights organizations that included over 40 hours of discussions on the UNHCHR's 27 human rights recommendations. Human rights training is mandatory for all members of the military and police. Less than 2 percent of human rights violations are attributable to government security forces, according to GOC statistics. But recent violations by members of the armed forces, such as the murders in August 2004 of three trade unionists in the highly conflictive Arauca Department, demonstrate the need for further improvement. Some prominent NGOs discount the statistical improvements and emphasize incidents such as the Arauca killings to claim the human rights situation has actually worsened. The Colombia office of UNHCHR has hinted that its next human rights report on Colombia will assert that human rights violations by the security forces have increased. Despite the ongoing dialogue, relations between

the Government and many prominent local NGOs are strained. They can be expected to sharply criticize the GOC during their forum on the first day of the conference. The GOC, UN and G-24 delegations will attend the NGO forum as observers.

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COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS  
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¶11. (U) Despite impressive progress against narco-trafficking in 2004 the year, Colombia remains a major producing country. More than 325 tons of drugs were captured through the efforts of Colombia's police and military forces. The U.S.-supported Anti-Narcotics Police Directorate (DIRAN) sprayed a record 136,555 hectares of coca and 3060 hectares of opium poppy during the year. Manual eradication accounted for the destruction of an additional 2,306 hectares of coca and 795 hectares of opium poppy. The FARC and AUC use drugs as a major fund source.

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ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE  
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¶12. (SBU) Alternative development, humanitarian aid, and democracy programs are going well. We have leveraged substantial private sector assistance to establish 270 square miles of legal agriculture benefiting 40,000 families. U.S. aid has helped nearly 2 million internally displaced persons. Colombia has the largest displaced population outside Africa.

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CONFERENCE GOALS AND THEMES  
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¶13. (C) Continued U.S. support at the highest levels will be critical to defeating narco-terrorism in Colombia. The U.S. delegation should note the GOC's record on combating drug trafficking; promoting human rights, sound economic policies, justice reform, and transparency in government; and aggressive action to demobilize paramilitary forces and pursue an effective peace process. Second, we should highlight significant human rights improvements under Uribe, and notable progress on goals established in the 2003 London Declaration. Finally, the U.S. delegation should press European representatives to more actively support the GOC in the peace process, human rights and rule of law, humanitarian assistance, productive and alternative development, and forestry development.

¶14. (U) The conference is an important opportunity for the donor community, especially European donors, to recognize GOC progress and pledge future support. The Uribe Administration has focused on six thematic areas: (1) the demobilization of illegal combatants and the establish of a legal framework to address their situation; (2) human rights protections and transition to an accusatorial justice system; (3) humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced and vulnerable populations; (4) productive alternative development to establish sustainable crops and replace illicit economic activities; (5) forestry projects to combat narcotics cultivation; and (6) regional development programs to tackle rural poverty and establish a government presence.

WOOD